

we enjoy in this country and in the international community and in the community of democracies? Where are the reporters, the members of the media who are talking about what is happening to Dr. Biscet? Is there not an elemental, an elemental duty and responsibility to talk about these facts by the free press? There is. They know it, and they are failing in that elemental duty.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SCHIFF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time of the gentleman from California (Mr. SCHIFF).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

MISTREATMENT OF CUBAN POLITICAL PRISONER, DR. OSCAR BISCET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to draw attention to the continued plight and mistreatment of political prisoners locked in Cuban jails, and obviously joining with my colleagues from Florida, and I thank also my other colleague from New Jersey, specifically paying attention to Dr. Oscar Biscet.

I have spoken on numerous occasions here on the House floor of the crushing campaign Castro waged against the Cuban pro-democracy movement earlier this year. Over the course of a few weeks in late March and early April, Castro's regime arrested an array of political opposition leaders and pro-democracy advocates. Inside of a month, the dissidents were arrested, arraigned, tried, and sentenced.

Dr. Biscet, already in state custody at the time, was tried in tandem with the other dissidents, and in April was sentenced for 25 years for "serving as a mercenary to a foreign state."

Dr. Biscet is a 42-year-old physician. He is President of the Lawton Foundation for Human Rights. He is a well-known follower of Ghandi and Martin Luther King, and is heralded for his religious and civic leadership. Just last week, on November 11, at Prison Kilo Cinco y Medio, Dr. Biscet peacefully protested with six other political prisoners the cruel treatment given by prison authorities to the family of an-

other fellow prisoner during their scheduled visit. Fearing that Dr. Biscet was becoming a leader among the other prisoners, he was transferred the next day to another maximum security prison in the province of Pinar del Rio, called Kilo 8.

In Kilo 8, Dr. Biscet has been confined in a punishment cell that he has referred to as a dungeon with another prisoner who has committed 12 violent criminal assaults, a blatant attempt to put Dr. Biscet's life in danger. His wife and parents traveled to Kilo 8 this Monday, November 17, for their assigned family visit. When they arrived, prison authorities informed them that Dr. Biscet was punished for 21 days without family visits. They told his family he is currently being confined in a cell with no sunlight that literally measures four feet by four feet. They told his family that he had been denied food supplies and toiletries and is without writing or reading materials.

Upon hearing this news, his mother required medical attention from the prison staff due to a sudden rise in her blood pressure and the horror of her son's living conditions. Mr. Speaker, compelled by circumstances and the persistence of Dr. Biscet's wife, prison authorities allowed his mother to see her son, but only for 10 minutes. Dr. Biscet asked his mother to alert international public opinion, since he had broken no prison rule, and they were forcing him to share a cell with a violent criminal intentionally placing his life in danger.

So I join my colleagues here on the House floor to inform Congress and the American public of the inhumane treatment of Dr. Biscet. I ask all my colleagues to join us here on the floor and to demand the unconditional and immediate release of Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet and all those prisoners whose only crime is a desire for basic human rights. We must send a strong message to Castro that his abuse of Cuban political prisoners has not gone unnoticed and will not be allowed to continue.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GUTKNECHT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. HINCHEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HINCHEY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

DR. OSCAR BISCET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise with my colleagues

today in support of one of the most courageous men of peace on the planet today, an advocate for freedom, Dr. Oscar Biscet. A long-time human rights activist and pro-life doctor in Cuba, Dr. Biscet had already spent some 3 years, unjustly, 3 years in Castro's gulag for speaking out against the death penalty in Cuba and for calling for the release of all political prisoners.

After his release, Mr. Speaker, in the fall of 2002, he remained undaunted by his oppressors, Castro and the brutal thugs who run his regime, and continued to attempt to peacefully organize human rights' supporters. Dr. Biscet was redetained with 16 other dissidents after they attempted to simply meet in a home in Havana to discuss human rights last September. Just think about that, my colleagues, just simply meeting, gathering together, and in come the thugs to take you away.

When police prevented him from entering that home, Dr. Biscet and others, just like Dr. Martin Luther King, sat down in the street and protested, uttering slogans like "long live human rights," and "freedom for political prisoners." For that, he received a draconian 25-year prison sentence in April. That was during the same time when there was a massive crackdown that Amnesty International pointed out, reminiscent of what happened during the early years of Castro's brutal regime when massive numbers of people were arrested and given long prison sentences, many of those, 75 of them, some of the bravest and brightest in Cuba today: Independent journalists and democracy activists, who now themselves languishing in prison.

Mr. Speaker, while reports of Dr. Biscet's actions in prison continue to be heroic, and the word does get out, this is a man of conscience, a man of courage, the reports of his mistreatment, however, have been equally horrific. He is heroic; the mistreatment is horrific. For months, we know that he has endured solitary confinement for refusing to wear the prisoner's uniform. He has lived with insufficient light, and now no light at all, no running water and no bed. His benign and peaceful protest on November 11 on behalf of the cruel treatment of another prisoner, even though he is suffering so much, Mr. Speaker, he speaks out and tries to lend a hand to other prisoners who are being mistreated, for that he was moved to a punishment cell, as my colleagues have pointed out, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART), who spoke so eloquently a moment ago, to a cell known as the dungeon.

This man, this peaceful man, this Martin Luther King of Cuba is now languishing in a dungeon, a small confined area with no light. He has been put into a prison cell, this dungeon, with a man who on 12 different occasions has committed assault.

I remember during the years of Nicolae Ceausescu, the brutal thug in